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SUBJECT: Tuna farming in Croatia: generating jobs
and some controversy

¶1. SUMMARY: Croatia enjoys a trade surplus in the fish and seafood products sector with total exports of \$103 million in 2004. Of that, Croatia exported approximately 4000 tons of tuna worth \$55 million, more than 50% of total fish exports. An estimated 500 jobs and additional 2000 jobs of indirect employment have been created in Croatia as a result of tuna farming operations. However, there are occasional protests against fish farming by those who worry about environmental damage or the impact on the tourism industry. END SUMMARY

Raising tuna for the Japanese market

¶2. Tuna farming started in Croatia in 1996 and has grown into one of the leading agricultural exports with over 95% of tuna exports going to Japan. Croatian flagged vessels fish the Adriatic and then tug their catches to farms off the Croatian coast at very slow speeds in order to keep the fish alive. Depending on where the fish are caught, transporting them to the farms can take weeks to months. Then, depending on the size of the fish, tuna are kept for months or years while they increase their fat content and biomass. In addition to farming all 900 tons of its Total Allowable Catch (TAC) as regulated by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Croatian farms import 50% of their tuna stocks from other countries.

¶3. Assistant Minister for Fisheries, Ivan Katavic noted that ICCAT reporting requirements are only for dead frozen or fresh tuna and that currently, only Malta requires Bluefin Statistical Documents (BFSD) for live fish that are caught and then transported to cages. Katavic worries that this lack of regulation could lead to the laundering of live tuna. He stressed that the preservation of tuna stocks is important to the GOC and further noted that tuna farming, especially if technology develops to reproduce and breed tuna in captivity, could help alleviate pressures on tuna stocks.

Impact on local communities

¶4. The GOC estimates that 500 direct jobs and 2000 indirect jobs have been created as a result of tuna farming, bringing people back to depopulated areas on the coast and islands. Some of these jobs include fishermen who provide feed fish for the

tuna, but many of the feed fish are imported, mostly from Scandinavia. However, not all localities have embraced tuna farming and some environmental groups worry that farming juvenile tuna before they can spawn in the open sea is reducing fish stocks. By regulation, fish cages are required to be located in water at least 50 meters deep to mitigate the risk of farm debris washing on shore. But some coastal communities still have expressed their concern that tuna farming will hurt tourism by polluting the surrounding waters.

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